Work Song

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Work Song

by Carlos_Of_Night_Vale

Summary

There is deep history in the bayous of Louisiana. Will Graham knows that better than anyone.

Notes

So I'm asking that you all keep in mind that I am a Black/Afro-Caribbean person who practices Haitian vodun/voodoo. Will learns about the practice, but was never formally invited/ancestrally linked to it and does not actively practice. He did, however, observe the basics of witchcraft, like herb work, intention, casting, etc.. Just want to clarify before we get too far into this.

Prologue- Dead of Night

There is deep history in the bayous of Louisiana. Will Graham knows that better than anyone.

As a child growing up in Louisiana, he'd heard rumors about the woman who lived deep in the bayou that everyone at school called a witch. They threw around that she was evil, used black magic to curse people, and could be seen at one of the St. Louis cemeteries collecting dirt from some of the graves. His father made sure he knew better than them. "She ain't never done harm to anyone who didn't do harm to someone else first," he stated gruffly when Will hopped in their old truck, armed with the rumors he heard at school that day.

"You know her?" Will asked, turning to look briefly at his father before looking back out the window.

His father nodded, "She helped us out with your mother when she started getting sick."

"Oh," Will stated blankly.

"Yeah," there was silence before his father spoke again, "Those kids at your school probably only say those things because they hear them with their parents. People like that'll say anything about Black folks, especially women."

That was the day that Will realized that the people at school weren't raised like he was.

It was the last of the conversation for a while, at least until Will met her for the first time. He was walking their dog out in the bayou and saw a beautiful dark-skinned woman with her hair in long dreadlocks twisted up on top of her head wrapped up in a brilliantly gold scarf. She was kneeling and had a large basket over her arm. It looked to Will as though she was collecting things off the floor, examining them, and dropping them in her basket. He stopped and watched the woman for a while, wondering if this was the woman that everyone was scared of at school. As he stood there with the dog, the woman smiled and stood, still looking around at the ground, "You gon' just stand there and stare or you gon' come talk to me?"

"I'm sorry for staring," he said, looking away from her as she glanced at him.

"That's a'ight, baby. You Chris's boy?" she asked, walking towards him and the dog.

Will nodded, "Yeah. I'm will."

"Well, it's nice to meet you, Will Graham. My name is Emeline," she came up to him and held her hand out to him.

He took it, "Nice to meet you, Miss Emeline."

Emeline laughed, and it sounded like windchimes to Will, "Just Emeline, Will. No need fo' no 'miss' in front of my name."

"Okay," Will said, still looking at the ground.

Emeline looked at him curiously, "You got anythin' important you doin' today?"

He shook his head.

"A'ight. If you done walkin' that dog a' yours, you go on and take him back home then come on back here. How you feel 'bout learnin' to forage?"

He nodded enthusiastically.

Emeline smiled, "Thought you would. Now go on and get that dog home an' meet me back here so we can get started." As he took off running towards home with dog in tow, she yelled after him, "Don't forget to tell you're papa that you gon' be with me for the evening!"

He didn't stop running, but threw his hand up in response. His father smiled when Will, breathless, came home babbling excitedly about Emeline and her offer. Chris nodded, and told him to be careful. Will smiled widely, eyes just below his fathers, and turned tail to run back towards Emeline. His father went back to fixing the engine of their boat, knowing that Emeline would escort Will home safely when it got dark.

Will spent every moment of his spare time with Emeline after that day.

She didn't just teach him to forage, she taught him the names, which ones could heal, which ones could hurt, and which ones were best for spells. From bush palmetto and muscadine, to salvinia and duckweed, he learned them all under Emeline's careful and gentle hands. She taught him about her religion and her craft. Most people called it voodoo, she told him, but she called it vodun. Will thought it was beautiful. The way she would grind up the herbs she dried on her walls. Emeline once took him with her to the cemetery she went to the most often, cemetery number one. She guided him carefully through the tombs and crypts to one in particular. It was marked with triple x's in red and had flowers sitting all around the door. Emeline explained that this was the tomb of the first voodoo queen in New Orleans, Marie Laveau. It fascinated Will, and he asked her all sorts of questions about her. She answered them all with the same care with which she taught him everything else. As he grew older, he practiced the craft with her, never doing quite the same thing. She had read the cards for him and asked the Lwa* if he could do what she did. She had told him that he was not meant for vodun, but that he would find his own path eventually.

Will learned everything he could from her before his father died and he was taken away from the bayou. Despite the distance, he still kept up with everything the Emeline taught him. When he could, he would make his way back to the bayou where he would spend hours with her, learning whatever he could. Eventually, he came one day and she wasn't there. She left him a note, saying that she had gone somewhere and didn't know when she would be back. He left a note in response, and would go every week to leave Emeline another letter about his life. She would respond every once in a while, but he didn't see her. The last letter he left for her at her home was just before he left for his new home in Wolf Trap, Virginia. He moved, settled in, and the first time he got his mail, there was a letter from Emeline right on top of the pile. He smiled as he read and sat down to start his response. Their letters were superficial, sharing knowledge back and forth as Will learned about the native plants and wildlife around his new home.

It was normal, familiar, and remained that way. At least, until Will met Hannibal Lecter.

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*Lwa- the Lwa (or Loa) are the main spirits that are worshiped in Haitian voodoo. The aren't actual deities, but are created by God to assist practitioners in their daily tasks
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Sinnerman

Chapter Summary

Sinnerman, where you gon' run to?

Chapter Notes

hi yeah i'm not dead it was just finals/midterms time. however, i am back and will update consistently i swear.

Chapter 1 — Sinnerman

As soon as Will returned home the day he met Hannibal Lecter, the phone rang. He gave his dogs their scratches before jogging over and answering it, “Hello?”

“That man gon’ give you more trouble than you want, boy,” drawled an accented voice from the other side.

“Emeline?” Will asked.

“Finally got a phone so we can talk more, baby,” she replied, the smile in her voice obvious.

Will shook his head, “Took you long enough.”

“Don’t be talkin’ back to me, William Graham. You know better than that,” Emeline scolded playfully.

Will laughed, “Fair enough. But, what you said. Before, I mean. What was that about?”

Emeline’s tone went serious, “Whoever you met today. That man. Will, baby, he’s gon’ make trouble for you, and it ain’t gon’ be anything good.”

“Emeline, how did you even know I met anyone today?” Will asked.

There was silence on the other end for a moment before Emeline spoke again, “I had a feeling. Read your cards, and Will..you need to prepare.”

“For what?” he asked, confused.

“For whatever’s coming. The good and the bad,” she stated. “Because as much bad is on your way, there is some good,” her tone became slightly mischievous, “I saw a woman coming soon.”

Will groaned, “Emeline…”

She laughed, a deep and chesty one that made Will smile, “I’m just playin’ with you, baby! But a smart strong woman might do you some good.”

Will huffed out a laugh, “Yeah, it might. Anyone I know?”

“Not yet. You got time,” she replied gently.

“Guess I do,” Will responded.

“Well, I’ll let you go, baby. Be careful for me, aight?” Emeline asked gently.

“I will, Emeline,” Will replied.

They said their goodbyes and Will hung up, turning to look at his dogs. “Time for dinner, guys,” he said, scratching the ears of the nearest dog to him. He then turned to preparing dinner for his dogs, thinking carefully about what Emeline had told him.

Everything had happened so quickly. Finding Elise, the discovery of Cassie Boyle, the construction site, and Garret Jacob Hobbs. Watching Hobbs’ wife die on the stairs, walking into that house, Hobbs slitting his daughter’s throat. The memory of those ten shots he fired into Hobbs’ chest kept ringing through his ears. It felt like he still had Abigail’s blood on his hands. Hannibal taking over to keep her alive had felt like relief. He couldn’t be responsible for keeping her alive, not after making her an orphan.

He shot awake that night to the sound of his phone ringing. Will reached over and answered with a groggy, “Hello?”

“Will,” came Emeline’s voice from the other side.

“Emeline,” Will sighed, “Hey.”

“I saw the news. How you doin’, baby?” she asked gently.

Will sat up and swung his legs around, “Could definitely be better.”

“Mmhm. Now how you really feelin’?” Emeline asked.

“I..I feel guilty, I guess. I made that girl an orphan, Em,” Will sighed.

“That’s how it goes sometimes, baby,” Emeline stated, “but that girl is alive because of you. She gets to live. Besides, she has guilt of her own to carry.”

He ran his hand over his face, “Her father killed because of her.”

“That ain’t all, Will,” she responded.

“Emeline..,” Will began.

“This ain’t just the cards, baby,” Emeline interrupted, “I was guttin’ a chicken for jambalaya and I read it in the guts. Will, that girl helped her father find those girls.”

Will inhaled sharply. “What?” he asked.

“She did what she had to do to survive, Will,” Emeline responded softly.

“Emeline, if she lured those girls, she’s just as much of a killer as her father,” he stated.

She sighed, “Will, honey, she’s a victim too. You know that.”

Will sighed, “Yeah. Yeah, I know.”

There was silence between the two for a few moments, “She gon’ need you, Will. That dark comin’ for you? Same thing’s coming for her, too.”

“I don’t know what to do for her, Em,” Will choked out.

“Just do what you can, honey. That will be enough.”

Will shut his eyes, “I’ll try.”

“I know you will. Just be careful, baby.”

“I will be, Em.”

“Now use those herbs I sent you and get some sleep. I know you ain’t sleepin’ right.”

“I will. Thanks for those, by the way.”

“Mmhm. You’re welcome, Will. Now sleep.

“Yes, ma’am.”

“Goodnight, baby.”

“Goodnight, Em.”

The woods of Wolf Trap were quiet. In the dark and quiet evening, everything seemed still. A deer was moving quietly through the underbrush, stopping to eat some grass poking through the leaves. The silence was broken by a twig snapping under the foot of something much larger. The deer’s head snapped up and started to run. It did not get far.

It sprinted a short distance before it was suddenly gone in a flash of black shadow. The sounds of tearing flesh rang through the air, cutting the quiet of the forest. A large, hulking black figure stood, walking away from the now mangled carcass of the deer. It moved silently with a steady gait through Wolf Trap until it came to the tree line. There it stopped, it’s horned head tilting as it seemed to examine the lonely little house in the distance.

The creature stood there for hours like that in silence, watching the little house. It straightened it’s neck once more. Then it seemed to smile, it’s gaunt face giving no hints as to what it was truly feeling, before turning back into the silent woods once again.

In the little house across the field from the woods, Will Graham stirred in his sleep.

Secret

Chapter Summary

Got a secret, can you keep it? Swear this one you'll save!

Or, the Amuse-Bouche/Potage speedrun

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Chapter 2 — Secret

Abigail Hobbs was alive, a killer, and in a coma. Will kept repeating that to himself as he shot at the practice target. Alive, killer, comatose. He shot again, but now the target was Garret Jacob Hobbs. Alive, killer, comatose. It was moving closer. Alive, killer, comatose. He refilled his clip and kept shooting. Alive, killer, comatose. Jack's knock on the window is what woke him up.

He got out of the car and stood in front of Garret Jacob Hobbs's hunting cabin, "Could be a permanent installation in your Evil Minds Museum."

"Well, what we learn about Garret Jacob Hobbs will help us catch the next one like him. There's still seven bodies unaccounted for."

Will huffed out a laugh, "Yeah, well, he was eating them."

Jack glanced over at him as they ascended the stairs to the top level, “Had to be some parts of them he wasn’t eating.”

“Not necessarily,” Will grimaced.

“All right, what if Hobbs wasn’t eating alone? It’s a lot of work. Disappearing these girls, butchering them, and then not leaving a shred of anything other than what’s in this room,” Jack argued, gesturing to the rack of antlers around them.

Will looked around the room, a weary feeling overtaking him as he did, “Someone he hunted with.”

“Someone who is in a coma, who also happened to be someone he hunted with.”

“Abigail Hobbs is a suspect?” Will froze momentarily before continuing to look around the cabin.

Jack nodded, “We’ve been conducting house-to-house interviews at the Hobbs residence, and, uh, at this property also. Hobbs spent a lot of time here. Spent a lot of time with his daughter here. She would make the ideal bait, wouldn’t she?”

As Jack spoke, something hanging from a rack of antlers caught his eye. “Hobbs killed alone,” he stated as he removed a long red hair from the antlers, “Ah…someone else was here.”

When Alana Bloom arrived as the last of Will's class streamed out of the hall, he knew that Jack wouldn't be far behind her. "Hi."

"How are you, Will?" she asked in that particular way that told you right off the bat that she was a therapist.

"Uh, I have no idea," he looked up, "Let me guess. Ambush?"

Alana gave him a slight smile, "Absolutely. When Jack arrives, consider yourself ambushed."

Will looked over he shoulder to see Jack walking through the doorway, "Here's Jack."

"How was class?" the other man asked as he stood next to Alana.

"They applauded. It was inappropriate."

"Well, the review board would beg to differ. You're up for a commendation. And they've, uh, okayed active return to the field."

Alana cut in, "The question is, do you want to go back to the field?"

"I want him back in the field. And I've told the board I'm recommending a psych eval," Jack retorted.

Will looked between the two as he finished packing his things, "Are we starting now?"

“Oh, the session won’t be with me,” Alana replied.

Jack glanced between them, “Hannibal Lecter’s a better fit. Your relationship’s not personal. But if you are more comfortable with Dr. Bloom–”

“No, I’m not going to be comfortable with anybody inside my head.”

Alana stepped closer to him, “You’ve never killed anyone before, Will. It’s a deadly force encounter. It’s a lot to digest.”

Will had to hold back an eye roll at that, “I used to work homicide in NOLA.”

“The reason you currently used to work Homicide is because you didn’t have the stomach for pulling the trigger. You just pulled the trigger ten times!” Jack spat back at him.

“So not a formality, then?” Will snarked.

Jack stepped forward to meet Alana’s distance, “No, it’s so I can get some sleep at night. I asked you to get close to the Hobbs thing. I need to know you didn’t get too close. How many nights did you spend in Abigail Hobbs’ hospital room, Will?”

Will decided to pointedly avoid the mention of Abigail in his reply, “Fine. I’ll have a conversation with him and see what happens. I can’t promise any more than that.”

“What’s that?” Will asked from the balcony of Hannibal’s incredibly ostentatious office.

“Your psychological evaluation. You are totally functional and more or less sane. Well done,” the older man smiled.

Will leaned over the railing with a raised eyebrow, “Did you just rubber stamp me?”

Hannibal chuckled, “Yes. Jack Crawford may lay his weary head to rest knowing he didn’t break you and our conversation can proceed unobstructed by paperwork.”

Will huffed out a laugh of his own before turning back to perusing the bookshelves, “Jack also thinks I need therapy.”

“What you need is a way out of dark places when Jack sends you there.”

Will laughed at that. Hannibal looked up at him, surprised at his reaction. The younger man turned once again to face him. “Sorry,” he replied, looking down at Hannibal’s slightly surprised face, “but Jack seems to be under the impression that I have no one besides my students and BSU staff to talk to about things.”

“And yet he continues to labor under the weight of his assumption. Why continue to allow him to do so?”

“Because I never bothered to tell him about Emeline.”

Hannibal looked curious, “Emeline?”

Will nodded as he walked over to the ladder, “Yeah. She’s a...mentor of sorts, I guess. I met her when I was still a kid in New Orleans.”

“A mother figure?”

“Almost. More of a godmother or an aunt. Never acted as a guardian. Just a guiding hand, so to speak.”

Hannibal nodded, “And have you talked to her recently?”

Will nodded as he descended the ladder, “Yeah.”

“About anything in particular?”

Will paused before he responded, “Mainly about Abigail.”

“Do you feel responsible for Abigail?”

“Of course. But my feelings about her are...complicated, to say the least.”

Hannibal nodded in understanding, “You saved Abigail Hobbs’ life. You also orphaned her. That comes with certain emotional obligations, regardless of empathy disorders.”

“You were there. You saved her life too. Do you feel obligated?”

“Yes. I feel a staggering amount of obligation. I feel responsibility. I’ve fantasized about scenarios where my actions may have allowed a different fate for Abigail Hobbs.”

Silence hung between them for several seconds before Will spoke again, “Jack thinks Abigail Hobbs helped her dad kill those girls.”

Hannibal glanced at him, “How does that make you feel?”

“How does that make you feel?” Will snapped back at him.

“I find it vulgar,” Will leveled a stare at him as more silence hung between them, “And entirely possible.”

Will grimaced, “That's what I was afraid of.”

“You think she could’ve done it?”

“I think Abigail did what she needed to do to survive.”

“As do I.”

Silence descended again before Will murmured out, “I want her to be safe.”

Hannibal looked over at him, “Then we’re on the same page. We keep her safe, no matter what.”

Will nodded, “No matter what.”

The next several days were a blur. Finding the nine bodies in the woods had been enough, but he hadn't expected to see Garret Jacob Hobbs's body in that grave. He had called Emeline immediately, who chastised him gently over the phone. "You can go talk to that therapist of yours, baby," she had laughed, "just be careful about it, you hear?"

He had gone to Hannibal after that. "I keep seeing Garret Jacob Hobbs," Will stated.

"Stress," Hannibal responded matter-of-factly.

"That your professional opinion?" Will drawled sarcastically.

"Would you like to hear something worse?" Hannibal responded.

Will shrugged, "Fair enough."

"Back to your current case. Why did he leave the arms exposed? To hold their hands? To feel the life leaving their bodies?"

"No, that's too esoteric for someone who took the time to bury his victims in a straight line. He's more practical," Will dropped into the chair across from Hannibal.

Hannibal leaned forward, "He was cultivating them."

"Feeding them intravenously, but still let them die eventually. But they weren't crops, Dr. Lecter. They were..fertilizer, for the fungus."

“The structure of a fungus mirrors that of the human brain, an intricate web of connections.”

“So you think he wants to connect?”

“Do you?”

Finding Eldon Stammets’s search history on his work computer had turned Will’s blood to ice. He had gone to Abigail’s hospital room as soon as he could after, only to run into Alana. The encounter was awkward, as all of his interactions with her seemed to be as of late. He was leaving when he got Jack’s call. That nearly froze him over completely. When he saw Stammets wheeling Abigail towards that elevator, some instinctual part of him took over, and he fired.

He went to Hannibal again after that. It was sometime during that conversation that he realized Emeline had been right. There was something..not right about Hannibal Lecter. He was going to find out what it was if it killed him.

Emeline called him early one morning, “That girl is gonna need you close, Will.”

“What?”

“You’re gonna have someone coming to tell you she’s awake.”

Will sat up quickly, “She is?”

“She is. There are worse things coming for her now her eyes are open, Will. She’s your responsibility.”

“I know, Em.”

“I’ll talk to you later, baby. Then you’re gonna tell me everything about her that you can.”

“Yes, ma’am.”

Alana showing up at his house that same morning was not a surprise after that. “Hey,” Will greeted from his place on the porch.

“Hey,” Alana walked over to him, “You’re up early.”

“Got an important call,” he stood and grabbed his mug of coffee, “Abigail awake?”

Alana stalled for a moment, “How did you know?”

Will shrugged, “Lucky guess. Should I get my coat?”

“Not quite yet. Has Jack called you?”

“No. He wants me to talk to her, doesn’t he?”

A heavy sigh, “Yeah.”

“Come on in. I’ll get you some coffee.”

“Thanks.”

The two walked inside as Will’s phone started to ring. “You don’t think I should see her, do you?” Will asked as he poured a cup for Alana.

“Eventually. Jack thinks Abigail was an accomplice to her father’s crimes. I don’t want to get in the middle of you and Jack, but–”

“The more people between Jack and I, the better. I also like the fact that you rattle him. He respects you far too much to yell at you, no matter how much he wants to.”

Alana laughed, “And I take advantage of that.”

Will handed her a mug of her own, “She doesn’t have anyone, Alana.” She made to speak, but Will held up a hand, “I know that it seems like I’m collecting another stray, but that’s not what this is. I just want her to be safe. However, you can go first, because I don’t have any idea about how to talk to kids.”

“Thank you, Will.”

“You’re welcome.”

Meeting Abigail with Hannibal had been..surprisingly painless. Besides the appearance of Freddie Lounds, that is. He had expected her to want to go home. She was - despite everything - an orphaned 17-year-old girl and she needed closure. The calm way she presented herself wasn’t out of the ordinary either, given what he knew. The next several days were spent listening to other people arguing about whether or not she should go. Jack won out in the end. So he, Hannibal, and Alana packed and took Abigail Hobbs home.

It did not go well.

Will thought Marissa Schurr was a good friend for Abigail, the brash to Abigail’s calm. Then he saw Hannibal’s face when she had called a mother a ‘bitch’, and something in him

knew that Marissa Schurr wasn't going to be around for much longer. But he didn't have time to think about that. He had to focus on finding the man who had eyes on the target squarely on Abigail's back.

The next morning, they found Marissa Schurr's body mounted in Garret Jacob Hobbs's cabin. Will finally put two and two together when he saw the girl's body. "The guy down by the stream. Abigail said he asked if she helped her dad take his sister's lungs while she was alive. It's Cassie Boyle's brother, Nicholas."

Hannibal looked away from Marissa's body and over to him, "Do you think he did it?"

"I don't know."

They stood in silence for several moments before Jack stormed up the stairs and wasted no time in accusing Abigail. It somehow managed to go downhill from there. Freddie Lounds snuck past the police line to try and get to Abigail. Marissa Schurr's mother screaming at Abigail. Far too much paparazzi for anyone's liking. Then Nicholas Boyle snuck into the house and attacked Alana and Abigail.

Will drove home that night. Hannibal stayed behind with the rest. Will couldn't help but think that Hannibal had something to do with Nicholas Boyle's sudden disappearance after the attack. He knew Abigail and Hannibal had lied about what happened in that house. Nicholas Boyle was dead and buried somewhere in the woods, and he wasn't going to say anything. All he wanted to know is why Hannibal had helped Abigail hide the body.

He needed to figure out what Hannibal had to gain from killing.

Chapter End Notes

me? giving Will more mental and emotional autonomy? it's more likely than you think.

edit: i'm attending a Juneteenth celebration tomorrow and will not be uploading my normal Saturday fic. i'm just pushing everything back a day, so this one will be uploaded on the off-week Monday. just one day late, though, so not to bad

Eyes on Fire

Chapter Summary

the Ceuf/Coquilles speedrun with an slight introduction at the end.

Chapter Notes

these mostly transcripted chapters take so goddamn long y'all but it's here

Chapter 3 — Eyes on Fire

“Karen and Roger Turner. Child sweethearts. Owned a successful real estate business. Pillars of the community. Three children,” Jack rattled off.

“Minus one,” Will responded.

“A son, Jesse, disappeared last year. Last confirmed sighting had him boarding an RV at a rest area on route forty-seven. Possible runaway, probable abduction.”

“Or both.”

“Hundreds of tips, but not a single one held up past lunchtime. When misery rains, she pours.”

Will looked around, eyes falling on the family photos on desks and drawers, “Holidays, vacations, milestones... never reveals the whole picture.” Jack was going to speak, but Will cut in before he could, “False faces in family portraits. Layers and layers of lies betrayed by a sad glint in a child’s eyes.”

Jack looked at him before turning to the rest of the forensics team. Brian examining the bodies, Beverly examining the room, and Jimmy snapping photographs of the scene. “Norman Rockwell with a bullet,” Jimmy stated as he snapped another photo of the scene.

“Any signs of forced entry?” Jack asked?

Beverly turned to him, “Perimeter is clean of scoring and rupture. No broken windows or torn screens. It’s all sealed up tight.”

“They probably rang the doorbell,” Jack murmured.

“I’ve got bullet holes on the upper sections of the wall and ceiling.”

Jack nodded, “Pull the slugs for ballistics.”

Beverly nodded, “If they aren’t frangible, it shouldn’t be a problem.”

“Those elevated termination points match what I see on these bodies,” Brian jumped in, gesturing to the bodies around the table, “angled cranial impacts, coupled with acute exit wounds and conical spray, the shooter was firing from low to high, probably crouched.”

Jimmy shrugged, “or they were hobbits.”

Will had wandered, looking over every family photo he could see when something caught his eye about one of them, “How long since Jesse was abducted?”

Jack turned to him, “Just over a year.”

There wasn’t much else to say as they collected the bodies and got them back to the morgue. Will was silent mostly, outside of Brian’s attempted bards at his - admittedly lonely - childhood. He realized in the end that it was very likely that Jesse Turner had killed his own mother. That made something in him lurch, and he felt a pull in his gut. One he hadn’t felt in a while.

The Turner scene had been..something else. He got home that evening and let his dogs run out into the yard, leaving the front door open for them to come in and out as they pleased. When he couldn’t ignore the pull any more, he dropped all of his things and went to take the Tarot de Marseille deck that Emeline had helped him make when he was younger out of its box on his bookshelf. He shuffled it carefully as he sat down at his table and then started dealing. He pulled seven cards, put the deck aside, and flipped them over one by one.

“Two of cups,” Will began, muttering to himself as he flipped, “three of wands, three of swords, nine of coins, five of cups, and ten of swords.” He stood and closed the door as the last of his small pack crossed the threshold before sitting back down again. “What does this even mean?” he sighed. Something prodded him to pull one last card, so he reached for the desk, shuffled one last time, and pulled a final card. “Nine of wands,” he stated, “Nine of wands. What would that-”

He paused, staring down at the cards before him. It hit him like lightning, and he was up and walking towards his office where his fishing gear was. He flipped the light switch and immediately walked to his desk where the lure he was working on sat. Will took a seat and started examining it closely. There was nothing visible from the outside, so he started unraveling it quickly.

As he did, strands of hair started falling from the lure. Will knew that those strands of hair belonged to the victim of the copycat, Cassie Boyle and Marissa Schurr. “Well,” Will muttered, “I certainly didn’t put that there.”

“Tell me about your mother,” Hannibal began.

“Low hanging fruit, doctor. Freudian, some would say,” Will stated blandly.

Hannibal chuckled, “I suspect that fruit is on a high branch, very difficult to reach.”

Will shrugged, “Not really. She died not long after I was born. My dad raised me the best he could and Emeline filled in what he couldn’t teach me.”

“You hold Emeline in very high regard.”

“Yeah. She’s a good woman.”

“Perhaps one day I’ll have a chance to meet her.”

“Unlikely. She hates leaving NOLA.”

“I see.”

The silence hung in the air for a moment between them, “What about your mother? Quid pro quo, Dr. Lecter.”

Hannibal raised an eyebrow, “Both my parents died when I was very young. The proverbial orphan until I was adopted by my Uncle Robertas when I was 16.”

“You have orphan in common with Abigail Hobbs.”

“I think we’ll discover you and I have a great deal in common with Abigail. She’s already demonstrated an aptitude for the psychological.”

“Sounds about right.”

“You seem to have created a family for yourself, Will.”

“Yeah, a pack of strays and a traumatized teenager. Thanks for feeding them while I was gone, by the way. The dogs, I mean.”

Hannibal smiled at that, “Tell me about the Turners. Were they affluent? Well to do?”

“They certainly lived like it.”

“And your family?”

“Poor, with a swampside home on the bayou for most of my young life. My dad moved us around a lot to different boatyards.”

“It must’ve been hard to always be the stranger, the new boy in school.”

“Not as bad as it could’ve been. Emeline kept in contact all the time.”

“She kept you from feeling completely alone.”

“And I’m grateful to her for it. But I would’ve traded the travel and double washed clothes from Goodwill for stability any day.”

“Harboring a half-buried grudge against the rich?”

Will smiled wryly, “Just a little.”

“And what grudge was Mrs. Turner’s killer harboring against her?”

“Motherhood.”

“Not motherhood, a perversion of it,” was the response.

Will spotted Jack's entrance out of the corner of his eye and knew that this lesson wouldn't get finished today. "Alright, we'll finish this one up next time. Make sure you review beforehand. Class dismissed." He turned away from his class to face Jack, "You're making it difficult to provide an education, Jack."

"We found a match for a set of prints pulled from the Turner house. They belong to Connor Frist, a 13 year-old from Huntsville."

"Another kid?"

"Another missing kid. Vanished 10 months ago. Case never solved."

"Good news, Mr. and Mrs. Frist. Your son's alive. Bad news, he's a suspect in four murders," Will muttered. He looked over at Jack, "How many kids in the Frist family?"

"Three, same as the Turners."

"Oh god," Will grabbed his bag, "I'm guessing we're leaving now?"

"We have a Gulfstream standing by at Andrews Airforce Base. Borrowed it from Interior. The basic lab stuff will be on it. We'll be there within the hour if we leave now."

"Then let's go."

They got the bodies of the Frist family to the morgue, and it was almost the same as the Turners with one major difference. “Who was the additional corpse in the fireplace?” Jack questioned.

Will looked down at the charred body, his heart lurching, “I’d say Connor Frist.” As the rest of the team listed off the damage done to Mrs. Frist, he thought more about what this boy must’ve felt, “Her body went into convulsions. Conner Frist went into a panic. He had been prepped to shoot his mother, but not watch her suffer.”

“Shot her again to put her out of her misery. Different gun,” Brian stated as he turned Mrs. Frist’s head.

Beverly looked over the exit wound, “Larger caliber.”

“So someone else shot Conner’s mom,” Jimmy stated.

Jack nodded, “Connor couldn't put his panic back in the bottle. So he was shot too.”

“In anger. By the different gun. With the larger caliber. A gun that wasn’t used at the Turner house where everything went as planned. Whoever shot Conner Frist didn’t just kill him,” Will added, “they disowned him.”

“It’s supposed to be for Abigail,” Will muttered as he handed the present to Hannibal.

“Supposed to be?”

“Thought better of it. Wasn’t thinking clearly. I was upset when I bought it. Maybe still am.”

“You bare gifts when you’re angry?”

“Bad habit I picked up from Emeline. She told me that I should pick something else.”

“What is it?”

“Fly tying gear. For fishing.”

“Teaching her how to fish. Her father taught her how to hunt.”

“Hence the hesitation. I should’ve listened.”

“Feeling paternal?”

“Aren’t you?”

Hannibal nodded, “Yes. Our good friend Dr. Bloom has advised against taking too personal an interest in Abigail’s welfare. You break it, you bought it.”

“Can’t break what’s already broken.”

“Can’t you?”

There was silence between them before Will continued, “I’m angry about these boys. I’m angry cause I know when I find them, I can’t help them. I can’t give them back what they gave away.”

“Family.”

“Yes.”

“Freddie Lounds has coined these young killers the Blood Brothers.”

“We call them the Lost Boys. Either way, it sounds a little vampiric to me.”

“Abigail is lost, too. Perhaps it is our responsibility, yours and mine, to help her find her way.”

Will looked at Hannibal, a glint in his eye, “I guess it is.”

Getting home, Will practically collapsed into the middle of his pack. He had saved Christopher. He had saved one more broken child. It wasn’t much, but it was something.

Being woken up in the middle of the night, barefoot, on the road by cops with Winston on his tail was not how Will had expected his morning to start. They drove him home and went inside with Winston, where the rest of his pack were waiting. He pet each of them and went to make himself some coffee as he stated out loud to himself, “Well I guess that’s what the nine of coins meant.” He drove to Hannibal’s house when the sky got lighter. He felt the tiniest bit guilty at waking the other man up so early, but any guilt he felt faded when he remembered the hairs of dead girls in his fishing gear.

When he arrived, Hannibal let him in and led him to the kitchen, “Although I may be, is it safe to assume you’re not sleepwalking now?”

“I’m sorry it’s so early.”

“Never apologize for coming to me. Office hours are for patients. My kitchen is always open to friends. Onset of sleepwalking in adulthood is less common than in children.”

“Could it be a seizure?” Will asked as he accepted the cup of coffee from Hannibal.

“I’d argue good old-fashioned post traumatic stress. Jack Crawford has gotten your hands very dirty.”

“Can’t argue with that. Now my own body is walking around without my permission.”

“Sleepwalkers demonstrate a difficulty handling aggression. Are you experiencing difficulty with aggressive feelings?”

Will thought about it for a moment before saying, “You said Jack sees me as fine china used for special guests. Beginning to feel more like an old mug.”

“You entered into a Devil’s Bargain with Jack Crawford. Takes a toll.”

Will snorten, “I wouldn’t call Jack the devil, but he’s certainly not what one would call a saint.”

“I agree.”

“Either way, I doubt I’ll get him a break any time soon.”

Will had spent a decent amount of time laying on a tarp over a sweat stained bed in a New Jersey hotel with two flayed bodies over him. The ‘John Smith’ who had done this had

transformed Mr. and Mrs. Anderson into angels to watch him as he slept. The team got the bodies to the morgue, and thus began the speculation. Two angels, kneeling in supplication before a man. That's when Will realized, "They weren't praying to him. They were praying for him. He's afraid. Probably dying." He looked over at Beverly, "What's in his vomit?"

She grabbed the toxicology report, "Dexamethasone... kepra.."

Brian cut in, "He was epileptic. Radiation?"

"Gamma four," Beverly finished.

"Steroids for inflammation. Anticonvulsants for seizures. Radiation from chemotherapy," Brian paused, "Our guy has a brain tumor."

Will nodded, "He's afraid of dying in his sleep. He makes angels to watch over him."

"There's no one and only spiritual center of the brain. Any idea of God comes from many areas of the mind working together in unison," Hannibal stated as he climbed down the stairs and handed Will a book.

Will started flipping through it, "Maybe I'm wrong. How do you profile someone who has an anomaly in their head changing the way they think?"

“A tumor can definitely affect brain function, even causing vivid hallucinations. However, what appears to be driving your Angel Maker to create heaven on Earth is a simple issue of mortality.”

“Can’t beat God, become him.”

“You said he was afraid.”

“He feels abandoned.”

“Ever feel abandoned, Will?”

“Abandonment requires expectation.”

“What were your expectations of Jack Crawford and the F.B.I.?”

“Jack hasn’t abandoned me.”

“Not in any discernible way. Perhaps in the way Gods abandon their creations.”

“Now this should be interesting. Please proceed, Doctor,” Will responded dryly.

“Jack gave you his word he would protect your head space. Yet he leaves you to your mental devices.”

“Alienation, Dr. Lecter? Interesting tactic.”

“Not at all, Will. I’m simply trying to help you understand this Angle Maker.”

“Not a standard psychopath. No sense of self destruction. Too careful for that.”

“Unless he’s being careful about his self-destruction. He’s making angels to pray over him when he sleeps. Who prays over us when we sleep?”

“Could be angels, could be monsters, could be something else entirely. Who’s to say, really,” Will responded.

The security guard on the scaffolding was..a lot. Brian finding the Angel Maker’s testicles was another thing entirely. Will grimaced as he looked at them, “He’s not just making angels, he’s getting ready to become one. Angels don’t have genitalia.”

“Save me a place in hell,” Jimmy muttered, his disgust obvious.

Jack looked at Will, “He was afraid of dying and now he’s getting used to the idea?”

“It’s either acceptance or bargaining.”

Brian grimaced, “Some bargaining chips.”

“Does that mean he’s done making angels or just getting started?”

Will shrugged, “I don’t know.”

“He’s not just killing when he gets sleepy. How is he choosing them?”

“I don’t know. Ask him.”

“I’m asking you.”

“You’re the head of the Behavioral Science Unit, Jack. Why don’t you come up with your own answers if you don’t like mine?”

Brian, Jimmy, and Beverly froze as Jack leveled a glare at Will. “I didn’t hear that,” Jack stated coldly.

Will only nodded before he walked away.

His talk with Beverly in the morgue before Jimmy showed up had been enlightening. However, Jimmy’s bombshell had broken the moment entirely. “No? Meet Roger & Marilyn Brunner,” he said, “May recognize them from such lists as Most Wanted. He likes to rape and murder. She likes to watch. We have a DNA match. They falsified the motel registry and were driving a stolen car, so it took a second to identify them.”

Will took the report from him and glanced over it, “I wonder how long it took Angel Maker to identify them. He didn’t choose them randomly.”

Jimmy shrugged as he handed Beverly another copy, “He knows something about them. The murdered Security Guard wasn’t actually a Security Guard, which I’d say means he was up to no good.”

“Could the Angel Maker be a vigilante?” Beverly questioned.

“Vigilantes are pragmatic, purposeful. They don’t lay down and go to sleep under their crimes. In his mind, he’s doing God’s work,” Will stated.

Beverly looked over at him, “That spells vigilante.”

“Playing God has advantages. One of them is never having to be alone,” Will added.

“So he makes angels out of demons,” Beverly nodded.

Jimmy glanced over at them, “How does he know they’re demons?”

“He doesn’t have to know,” Will replied, “he just has to believe.”

Waking up on his roof was - once again - not an ideal way to start his day. He’d started running through aspirin on an incredibly consistent basis. He shook three out in Hannibal’s office as he was offered a glass of water. “It’s hard to lie still and fear going to sleep when it’s

there to think about. You listen to your breathing in the dark and the tiny clicks of your blinking eyes," Hannibal said as Will paced the office.

"I dream more now than I used to."

"Your dreams were the one place you could be physically safe relinquishing control. Not anymore."

"I thought about zipping myself into a sleeping bag before I go to sleep, but it sounds too much like a poor man's straight jacket."

Will walked towards the statue of the stag, his fingers tracing over it as Hannibal spoke, "Have you determined how this Angel Maker is choosing his victims?"

"He doesn't see people how everyone else sees them. He can tell if you're naughty or nice. Or he thinks he can. And so far, he hasn't been wrong."

"God has given this Angel Maker insight into the souls of man?"

"God didn't give him insight. Gave him a tumor. He's just a man whose brain is playing tricks on him," Will responded. A silence hung between the two for a brief moment, "Do you think my brain is playing tricks on me, Dr. Lecter?"

"You want to feel such sweet and easy peace. The Angel Maker wants that same peace. He hopes to feel his way cautiously inside it and find it is endless all around him."

"Way to set himself up for disappointment."

"You accept the impossibility of such a feeling. Whereas the Angel Maker is still chasing it. If he got close to it, that's where he would look for it again."

“Just have to figure out the pattern.”

“And your patterns, Will?”

“My patterns?”

“You’re trapped in a pattern of behaviors that you can’t break. But you have a choice. The Angel Maker will be destroyed by what’s happening in his head. You don’t have to be.”

Hannibal was right behind him now, and the hair on the back of Will’s neck prickled. Everything in his head was screaming *wrong, wrong, wrong*, and that’s when he realized that Hannibal Lecter was not human. Then he felt the bristle of an inhale of breath on his neck. “Did you just *smell* me?”

“Difficult to avoid. I really must introduce you to a finer after shave. That smells like something with a ship on the bottle.”

“I keep getting in for Christmas,” Will replied blandly.

“Have your headaches gotten any worse lately? More frequent?”

“Yes, actually.”

“I’d change the aftershave.”

Will’s gut clenched in the way that told him that what had just come out of Hannibal’s mouth was a lie.

The visit to Elliot Budish's family was somber. It was obvious that this woman just wanted her husband back, something she would never get. It was even more somber when they got to the barn. Looking up at Budish struck a chord with him. "I don't know how much longer I can be all that useful to you, Jack," he said.

"Really?" Jack questioned, walking over to him, "You caught three. The last three we had, you caught."

"I didn't catch this one. Elliot Budish surrendered."

"I'm used to not getting information from my wife. I don't need to not get information from you, too."

"It's getting harder and harder to make myself look."

They made Jack pause, "No one is asking you to look alone."

"But I am looking alone. And you know what looking at this does."

"I know what happens when you don't look. So do you."

He turned to ook at Jack, "I can make myself look but the thinking is shutting down."

“What is it about this one?”

“It’s not this one. It’s all of them. It’s the next one. It’s the one I know is coming after that.”

“I don’t think you want to go back to your lecture hall and read about the next one on TattleCrime.com.”

“No, I don’t. But that may be what I have to do. This is bad for me.”

“I’m not the pope, I’m not going to tell you what you ought to do-.”

Will cut in before he could finish, “Sounds like that’s exactly what you’re going to do.”

“You go back to your classroom and there’s more killing that you could have prevented, it will sour that classroom forever.”

“Maybe. Then maybe I find a job as a diesel mechanic in a boatyard.”

“If you want to quit, quit,” Jack stated simply before walking out, leaving Will alone with the hanging body of Elliot Budish.

Will exhaled heavily as he sat at his dining room table. He had his deck in front of him again. He had pulled the same cards again. “Two of cups, three of wands, three of swords, nine of coins, five of cups, and ten of swords,” he whispered. He traced a finger over the cards. “I know what you all are,” he said, before resting on the five of cups, “but who are you supposed to be?”

In the darkness of the woods on the edge of Will’s property, a tall horned monster stood in the trees, watching.

Several hundred miles away in Baltimore, Fredrieka Chilton finished lighting the candles around her bathroom, dropped her bathrobe, and stepped carefully into her orange and rose scented milk bath.

Gold Dust Woman

Chapter Summary

Rock on, gold dust woman. Take your silver spoon. Dig your grave

or,

the Fredrieka Chilton interlude

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Chapter 4 — Gold Dust Woman

Fredrieka Chilton's grandmother had come to the United States from Cuba when she was a young woman. She told Fredrieka that she had gone to church every Sunday and met her husband, an immigrant also from Cuba, pretending to be a good Roma Catholic woman. But she had never let go of her people's religion.

“I never stopped,” she had said while braiding eight year old Fredrieka’s hair one evening, “because I knew that one day, I would pass them on to your mother, and she would pass them to you.”

“Did grandpa know?” she had asked, leaning into her grandmother’s leg.

Her grandmother had laughed. “Oh, he figured it out eventually,” she had chuckled, “but by then, he had just accepted it as a part of me.”

“He loved you very much,” Fredreika nodded.

“He did.”

“Will I ever find someone who loves me that much, grandma?”

Her grandmother had laughed louder at that. “Oh, Fredrieka,” she had grinned, pulling the little girl to her feet, “you have too much love in you for just one person.”

Fredrieka had tilted her head at her, “What does that mean, grandma?”

“You’ll see someday. Now, come. We have a shrine to clean.”

Fredrieka had been devastated when her grandmother died. But that conversation had remained with her for a very long time. As 14 year old Fredrieka sat in the big church and listened to the priest talk about how God would welcome her grandmother with open arms, she offered a prayer to Olodumare* and the oricha** instead. It made her feel better, knowing that there was at least one person praying for her grandmother's egun*** the way she would have wanted it.

When it came time to divide her grandmother's things, her mother, uncles, and aunts had tried to throw her shrine and tools away. Fredrieka had pitched the biggest fit she'd ever thrown until they'd given everything to her. Holding her grandmother's tarot deck in her hands had been almost a relief. She had her grandmother's book, too. She started reading everything her grandmother had written, and she learned.

Fredrieka's decision to go into medicine had been greatly influenced by her grandmother's book.

She eventually came to realize what her grandmother had meant when she said that she had too much love in her for one person. All the relationships she had through high school

and college left her unfulfilled. It never felt like enough, and there was always some wrongness about it. It just wasn't the right person.

It was meeting Hannibal that set something off in her. He had seemed nice, and being around him had felt..unrealistically good. But he set off her alarm bells. There was something not right, not human, about him. It took a lot of observation to come to that conclusion. Knowing that he was going into psychology was terrifying. Knowing that he had come from medicine was even more so.

They encountered each other a few times, since they floated within the same circles. They had flirted subtly more than once. But it never went anywhere. She was almost thankful for that. Almost. Because for all his unsettling energy, Hannibal Lecter was incredibly attractive.

That was unnerving.

When she found out she had gotten the job at BSHCI, she was thrilled. It was the opportunity she had been looking for. Somewhere where she could help people using everything she knew, from school and from her grandmother. It was not as easy as she thought it would be.

There was no way to measure how her patients would react. It was mostly trial and error. With Able Gideon, it ended up being mainly error. She had never imagined that she would internalize the Ripper. However, it did confirm her suspicions about Hannibal Lecter being said Ripper. While this was very useful to her personally, she still had no proof. She also now had a severely deranged man who thought he was an entirely different killer. She had assumed that she could handle it.

Then Gideon decided to replicate the Wound Man on one of her nurses.

So she called in some help.

“Agent Crawford,” Fredreika spoke into the phone at her desk, “is there any way I could have you come and confirm something for me?”

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*Olodumare - also known as Olorun or Olofi; the overarching deity of Santeria; each name is a different concept - Olodumare is the divine essence, Olorun is the creator of all beings, and Olofi dwells in all creation

**oricha - also knows as the ocha or santos; the name for the 16 deities of Santeria

***egun - also knows as muertos or espiritus; the names for the spirits of the dead, used in traditional ancestor veneration

Chapter End Notes

i just.....i just like her so much
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Hammer Horror

Chapter Summary

Jack grimaced, “Graham needs to see the crime scene in as much privacy as possible.”

“Of course,” she stood, “Dr. Bloom assured me you would cooperate on procedure.”

Will stood as well, “I will, but I need to be alone.”

Frederika raised an eyebrow at him, “Yes. That particular skill has made you a constant subject of conversation in psychiatric circles.”

“Am I?” Will answered.

“I’m not one to engage in petty gossip about a person who’s not there to defend himself, Mister Graham,” she stated as she retrieved a file from her desk.

Will blinked twice. He hadn’t expected that answer, “Thank you.”

She offered him a closed mouth smile, “You’re welcome. Shall we?”

Chapter Notes

i'm sorry that this chapter took over a year but it's 21 pages so hopefully that makes up for me ghosting this fic for so long (sorry about that)

edit (3/12/2023): just wanna thank andrew for dropping that preview of eat your young. everybody say thank you, andrew!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter 5 — Hammer Horror

Will and Jack stepped out of the FBI sedan, Jack going into a brief description of why they were there. “Freddie Lounds ran an unconfirmed story that the Chesapeake Ripper may already be in custody,” the man stated.

Will rolled his eyes, “Unconfirmed? Am I confirming? Fact-checking for Freddie Lounds?”

“You’re fact-checking for me,” Jack replied, “and Dr. Chilton called in a favor.”

“Never met her,” Will shrugged absently as he eyed the sign for the Baltimore State Hospital for the Criminally Insane, “I used to be nervous walking into places like this. I was afraid they’d never let me out again.”

Jack raised an eyebrow, “Used to be? What changed?”

Will gave him a small smile, “Had a serious talk with Emeline and got some help.”

“Then remind me to buy her a gift basket when you finally introduce me to her,” Jack grinned.

“I’ll do that,” Will snorted.

They walked into Frederika Chilton’s office and Will felt his shoulders drop instantly. There was a familiar smell of palo santo in the air, and any tension that he had been carrying in his shoulders leached out. He glanced around the office and took in the otanes* that littered

the shelves. His gaze turned to take in Frederika Chilton as she came around her desk to greet them.

“Jack, thank you for coming,” she smiled. She turned to him, extending a hand, “Mister Graham, it’s wonderful to finally meet you. I’ve heard quite a bit about you from Doctor Bloom.”

“Likewise,” he replied, grabbing her hand to return the handshake.

As soon as their hands touched, the air thrummed around them. There was a pause as they made direct eye contact with each other. Frederika’s smile softened into something more real, and Will was struck with the realization that she was his five of cups.

The moment was broken when Jack started speaking, “Doctor Chilton, we need to see the crime scene while it’s still relatively undisturbed.”

“Of course,” Frederika blinked, releasing Will’s hand, “Please, sit.” She walked back around her desk and sat down as Will and Jack did the same. “For something so disturbing, I assure you it’s undisturbed,” she began, “Medical personnel made sure Nurse Shell was no longer alive and came right back out. The infirmary has been sealed off, waiting for you.”

Will frowned slightly, “Why was a nurse left alone with a prisoner in a high security psychiatric hospital?”

Frederika turned herself in his direction, “Gideon has - until now - been an exemplary patient. Cooperative and seemingly responsive to his therapy. So our present administrator ordered for his security to be relaxed.”

“Present administrator?” Jask questioned.

The woman directed her gaze towards him with a wry smile, “I can’t imagine she’ll be in that position much longer.” She paused, looking down at her desk, “I can’t help but feel

responsible. I worked with Gideon for years, sat directly across from him and I had no idea what he was hiding. Now one of my staff is dead."

Jack grimaced, "Graham needs to see the crime scene in as much privacy as possible."

"Of course," she stood, "Dr. Bloom assured me you would cooperate on procedure."

Will stood as well, "I will, but I need to be alone."

Frederika raised an eyebrow at him, "Yes. That particular skill has made you a constant subject of conversation in psychiatric circles."

"Am I?" Will answered.

"I'm not one to engage in petty gossip about a person who's not there to defend himself, Mister Graham," she stated as she retrieved a file from her desk.

Will blinked twice. He hadn't expected that answer, "Thank you."

She offered him a closed mouth smile, "You're welcome. Shall we?"

Frederika led them down the hallway towards the infirmary, Jack asking questions as they walked, “Gideon was restrained?”

“Handcuffs,” Frederika replied, “Concealed a fork tine under the flesh of his palm and used it to pick the lock.”

“Where is he now?” Will questioned.

She turned to face him as she walked, “In his cell.” There was a pause before she continued, her voice carefully neutral, “From what I saw, the removal of organs and abdominal are all consistent with the Chesapeake Ripper. As is the distinctive brutalization of the corpse.”

“Chesapeake Ripper’s still at large. You consulted with us on his last sounder,” Jack stated in response.

“I know,” Frederika replied, voice still neutral, “but Gideon looks to be making a strong case for himself.”

Jack and Will shared a look. “Meaning?” Jack asked.

Frederika just grimaced as she opened the door to the infirmary, showing them the scene. The nurse was impaled multiple times over, speared halfway down on each of them. It almost looked like she was floating on various pieces of metal.

“Ah,” Will nodded.

Frederika nodded, “Exactly. Should we leave you to it, then?”

“Please,” he replied, glancing at her and catching her eyes once again.

Jack and Frederika left him alone in the room with a dead woman, and Will let the pendulum fall.

Jack stepped back into the room after several moments as the pendulum swung back and Will returned to himself. He turned to the other man, catching the briefest flash of Frederika's eyes on him before the door shut behind Jack. Will shook his head minutely before he spoke, "As far as we know, the Chesapeake Ripper hasn't killed in over two years. When was Gideon admitted?"

"Almost two years ago," Jack muttered, clearly lost in his own thoughts for the time being.

Will was only thinking about Frederika on the other side of the door.

"Hm. Will, you ready?" Jack asked.

"Yeah," was the reply.

Jack held the door open for Will as they left. Frederika was speaking to another orderlie, and wrapped up the conversation as they approached. "Were you able to ascertain anything useful?" she asked, clearly directing her question at Will.

He shrugged, “Something, but not enough.” He glanced at Jack, “I think we should call in Alana. As soon as possible.”

“I can make myself available tomorrow,” Frederika stated, looking to Jack.

Jack reached for his phone, “I’ll give her a call.” He nodded at Frederika before beginning his walk back towards the exit.

The remaining two were silent for several moments before Will spoke, “Santeria, right?”

The woman smiled, “Learned from my grandmother. You?”

“Learned from a mambo in New Orleans,” Will smiled in reply.

“Huh,” Frederika chuckled as they started walking together after Jack, “Not what I expected. Initiated?”

Will shook his head, “She read for me, but it’s not my path. Still figuring that out.”

“I can help with that,” she held out a hand, “Give me your phone.”

He reached into his pocket, handing her his phone. She typed away at it for several moments before she handed it back. He ran a hand through his hair, “I think that’s the easiest I’ve ever gotten a woman’s number.”

Frederika laughed, “I find that honestly hard to believe, Will Graham.”

“You shouldn’t. You know what my..reputation is,” Will stated.

“I already told you, Will, I don’t gossip about people who aren’t there to defend themselves. I meant it. While I admittedly find the way your mind works fascinating, it’s you as a person that I’m infinitely more interested in now,” she looked over at him, “if that’s not too forward.”

Will huffed a laugh, “Surprisingly, no. At least, not if the tarot de Marseille is right about you.”

“Tarot de Marseille,” Frederika mused, “If I ask very politely will you tell me what card I am? Or should I wait to let the suspense build?”

“The second one,” he stated.

Frederika hummed, her smile playful as they approached her office, “I was afraid you were going to say that. But,” she stopped, “I do need to ask you a very important question.”

“Ask away,” Will replied.

“How do you feel about Hannibal Lecter?”

Will paused before he answered, “I think there are things that he’s hiding.”

She examined Will for a moment, “Something not quite natural about him, isn’t there?”

“Something not quite-.”

“-human,” they finished at the same time.

“You’ve noticed too,” Frederika stated.

Will nodded, “A few weeks ago.”

“Talks a lot but says very little.”

“He’s my therapist.”

“I’d find a new one.”

Will laughed, “Yeah, I probably should.”

“Well, you have my number, Will,” Frederika replied, opening the door to her office, “If you need anything at all, call me.”

“I’ll do that,” he nodded, before walking down the hallway to meet Jack.

Will got home that evening, and contemplated texting Frederika.

He didn’t. But he came very close.

The next day, he sat across from her again, this time with Alana at his side. There was something hanging in the air between the two women that Frederika was either unaware of or was wilfully ignoring. Will was betting on the latter.

"The volume of Able Gideon's mail is a relative nuisance. It's a bit like being his secretary instead of his doctor," Frederika mused, a slight smile on her face.

Alana shifted in her seat before she spoke, "Any specific correspondences that stood out from the others?"

Frederika shook her head, "Nothing out of the ordinary. There's the usual researchers and Ph.D candidates requesting interviews. Angry relatives or their supporters sending hate mail. Then the scattered dozens of lonely hearts seeking his hand in marriage."

"He butchered his last wife and her family at Thanksgiving," Alana deadpanned.

The other woman shrugged, "Well, there's no accounting for taste."

"Or intelligence," Will muttered.

Frederika smiled at him, "Of course. Anything else to add, Will?"

“Murdering his wife was impulsive. The Chesapeake Ripper is always methodical, meticulous. Which is why he’s so hard to catch,” Will responded, shrugging.

“Couldn’t agree more. Will the two of you be conducting a joint interview or separate?” Fredericka questioned.

Alana glanced at Will for a moment before she responded, “Separate. Compare and contrast.”

The other woman nodded, “You must be anxious to get started. You’ve spoken to Gideon previously in court, haven’t you Dr. Bloom? Along with your two sessions after his institutionalization and that article about him for the Journal of Criminal Psychology?”

Will noticed the tension in the air got just a little heavier.

Alana nodded, “Yes, I did.”

“He’s given you quite a bit of thought. Your notes were incredibly helpful while conducting my own interviews.”

Alana’s smile tightened, “I’m glad I was helpful.”

“More or less,” Will mumbled. Fredericka’s gaze slid over to him for a moment.

Alana stood, prompting Will and Fredericka to do the same, “I’ll go first.”

“Would you like me to escort you or are you alright with one of the orderlies?” Fredericka asked.

Alana shook her head, “No, I’ll be alright. Thank you.”

“Of course. That’ll give us a chance to finish our conversation, Will,” Fredericka smiled at him.

Will returned the smile, “Sounds good to me.”

Alana gave him a slight frown before she exited Fredericka’s office, taking the tension with her.

Fredericka exhaled harshly before turning to Will with a wry smile, “I’m sorry you had to witness that, Will.”

Will huffed a laugh, “What did I just witness exactly?”

“Alana seems to have engineered some sort of professional rivalry between us,” was the response.

“Seriously?” Will snorted.

“Seriously,” she nodded, amusement written across her face, “She’s always been rather competitive when it comes to me. Can’t imagine why.”

Will looked at her, “Can’t imagine?”

Fredericka rolled her eyes, “Well, I can imagine that she sees me as a rival in more than just our professional lives.” She smirked, “At least according to her.”

“This should be good,” Will crossed his arms.

“I believe she thinks that whatever imagined rivalry we have now seems to extend into the romantic.”

“Romantic?” Will raised an eyebrow.

The woman nodded, “Us mental health professionals all tend to travel in the same circles. She had something of an inappropriate crush on Hannibal that she holds a grudge against me for. He and I have certainly flirted, and he’s made more than one advance that I’ve rejected - for obvious reasons. Now I think she can tell that there’s something brewing between you and I, and she’s less than enthused.” Fredericka sat on her desk with a smirk, “She really does like you, Will.”

Will scoffed.

“You don’t agree?”

“She probably should’ve thought about that before she turned me down.”

“I see.”

“Yeah.”

Fredericka huffed a laugh, “I’d say I was sorry, but it’s her loss, and a win for me.”

“If it wasn’t overly forward I’d probably kiss you right now,” Will replied absentmindedly, not thinking before he spoke.

She laughed, outright this time, “While I’m sure you didn’t mean for that to slip out, I can honestly say I’d let you.”

Will ran a hand through his hair, “I’ll keep that in mind for next time.”

“I hope you will. Now, to get us back on track, how do you think Alana is getting on in there?”

“I don’t know. All I know is that she doesn’t think Gideon’s the Ripper.”

“Do you?” she asked, perching on the edge of her desk.

Will shook his head, “The movements are almost too accurate, though. Replicated, like a copycat.” He crossed his arms and sat on the other side of her desk, “You know something that you’re not telling.”

“Correct,” Fredericka stated, “I have an idea of who the Ripper is, but I don’t have any proof that anyone other than you would believe.”

“Right,” Will sighed, “It’s Hannibal, isn’t it?”

Fredericka smiled wanly, “I wish I could be more help, Will, I really do. But until we’re sure, I’m hesitant to make any sort of accusations.”

“I know,” he shifted to face her, “I’m just glad that there’s another person on my side in this.

“There’s no one else who’s side I’d rather be on, Will,” she smiled.

There was silence between them for a few moments before Will spoke again, “So, you mentioned Hannibal flirting with you?”

Fredericka smacked his arm lightly, “Of course you held onto that. But yes. Never went further than that, though. He’s quite good at it, honestly.”

“Yeah, I figured,” Will replied.

“Are you assuming he’s never flirted with you because you’ve either never noticed or because you're being purposefully obtuse?” she grinned slyly.

Will shrugged, “Both? Never really given it any thought.”

“Fair enough,” was the reply.

“He did smell me, though.”

A beat. “Excuse me?”

Will nodded sincerely, “He smelled me. I’d mentioned my recurring headache problem and he recommended I change my aftershave. Lie, obviously.”

Fredericka crossed her arms, “I’m just completely baffled that he actually smelled you. Did he just lean in and take a whiff?”

Will chuckled, “Pretty much, yeah.”

“Oh my god,” Fredericka laughed, “Will, I know it’s probably not funny and probably nefarious, but it’s incredibly funny.”

“No, you’re right. It’s ridiculous,” Will huffed, “and a complete giveaway that he’s-”

“-not human!” they said in unison.

Fredericka nodded, walking around to sit on her desk next to Will, “Exactly! What on earth was he thinking?”

“Probably never thought he’d get found out,” he responded.

“That’s very true,” she smiled.

A companionable silence fell over the two again. Will could feel the energy radiating off of Fredericka, relaxing and warm. He moved one hand closer to where hers rested on the desk, just close enough to run a finger over the top of her hand. She hummed quietly in response, leaning into his side.

“How do you think she’s faring in there?” she turned her head to rest her chin onto his shoulder.

He looked down at her, a small but genuine smile on his face, “She’s fine. Probably wrapping up about now.”

The door opened at that moment, prompting the two of them to separate quickly. Fredericka smiled in a restrained but polite way as Alana entered the office, “Alana, welcome back. Were you able to gain anything useful?”

The other woman looked between the two of them suspiciously, “No. Will might have better luck than me, though.”

“Of course,” Fredericka nodded as her and Will both stood. Fredericka rounded her desk again to put her jacket on, “Alana, would you mind if I walked Will down myself?”

Will watched as something around Alana’s eyes tightened, “No, not at all.”

“Wonderful. Will, shall we?”

He followed her to the door, turning back to Alana, “See you later.”

She just nodded once before he and Fredericka exited the office and made their way down the hallway.

“I see it now. She’s definitely not happy,” Will muttered.

Fredericka just smiled, “I told you so.”

Will didn’t think that anybody expected Jack to get a ghost call from Miriam Lass. He hadn’t expected to imagine a giant black stag with raven’s feathers wandering the hallways of his place of employment either, but that seemed to be the state of things these days. “Will?”

Alana was right there with Jack. He shook the fog off as Alana said, “You looked like you were dreaming.”

“Was thinking about something else,” he mumbled, making a mental note to call Fredericka later.

Alana’s eyes tightened just the tiniest bit as Jack spoke, “I’ve got something for you to think about. We have a medium where we can speak to the Chesapeake Ripper. Is there a way to push him?”

“Push him toward what?”

“We might be able to influence him to blow up and become visible,” Alana explained.

Jack moved in, “Could we enrage him?”

Will took his glasses off and rubbed his eyes, “To what purpose, Jack? I’m not sure what you’re asking for?”

“Advice. That’s what I’m asking for. Could we enrage the Chesapeake Ripper and focus his attention?” Jack questioned.

“He’s already focused on Gideon as his adversary. Don’t fool around,” Will sighed, leveling Jack with a look.

Jack met his gaze evenly, “Gideon’s just a tabloid rumor. We need to make him the truth.”

“You might push the Ripper to kill again just to prove he isn’t in a hospital for the criminally insane,” Will stated.

Jack just shook his head, “I have to push, Will.”

Will put his glasses back on tiredly, “Are you thinking about playing ball with Freddie Lounds?”

“You know yourself it’s the best way to bait the real Chesapeake Ripper,” Jack replied.

Will sighed again. He hated Freddie Lounds.

“I’m calling to apologize in advance,” Will said as he got out of his car in Wolf Trap.

Fredericka’s laugh was tinny through the speaker of his phone, “I’m guessing that this has something to do with Jack sending Freddie Lounds to interview Gideon?”

Will grinned as he let the dogs out, “Yeah. Hence the apology.”

“I take it you and Freddie Lounds don’t get along then.”

“You could say that.”

“Will, why do you even let her get under your skin?”

Will sighed, “She’s very good at being very irritating.”

“Poor thing.”

“You’re mocking me.”

She paused, “Maybe a little. But only because it’s funny.”

“Yeah, I guess it kind of is,” Will mused as he watched the dogs run around the yard. “Hey, do you like dogs?”

“Yes,” Fredericka replied amusedly, “Any particular reason you’re asking?”

Will knelt to greet Ellie as she came panting up to him, “I have seven of them. Just wanted you to be prepared.”

“Is that your way of saying you’d like me to come over sometime, Will?” she teased.

“Yes.”

“Will, I’d love to eventually come over and meet your dogs.”

Fredericka's phone rang as she stared at the copy of Freddie Lounds's interview, wondering how many people would die for this, "Hello?"

"Fredericka," her blood somehow managed to run hot and cold at the same time.

"Hello Hannibal," she sat upright in her chair, her other hand grabbing at nothing, "To what do I owe the pleasure?"

The man chuckled into the phone, "I was calling to invite you to dinner."

Her stomach dropped, "Of course. When?"

"Are you free tonight?"

"I am."

"Wonderful. I'll see you this evening at 7:30 then."

"7:30 it is."

“Good-bye Fredericka.”

“Good-bye, Hannibal.”

As soon as she hung up the phone, Fredericka immediately dialed Will’s number.

“Graham.”

“Please tell me you don’t actually answer your phone like that.”

“Nah,” she could hear his smile through the phone, “I saw it was you calling.”

She leaned back into her chair, “All that effort just for me? Will, you shouldn’t have.”

He exhaled a laugh, “Least I could do. You okay?”

“Why are you assuming something’s wrong?” she asked, picking up a pen and fiddling with it.

“Because I can hear it in your voice, Fredericka,” was the answer.

She paused, setting the pen down, “I just got a call from Hannibal.”

“Ah.”

“I’ve been invited to dinner tonight.”

“I see. Are you going to go?”

She sighed, “I don’t really think I have a choice. If I’d said no, he might start to realize that I know something’s not right about him.”

Will sighed, “Fair enough. Should I crash your dinner party?”

“Emergency text codes,” Fredericka joked, “like a bad first date. A quick SOS and you just so happen to show up.”

“I’d do it,” Will laughed.

Fredericka smiled, “I have no doubt you would, but I’d hate for you to come so far out of your way. It’s a long drive just to play knight in shining armor, Will.”

“You’re worth the drive.”

She smiled, “Will Graham, I do believe you like me.”

“You just catching on to that now?”

“Quit while you’re ahead, Graham,” she smirked.

“If you say so,” he replied.

Hannibal hummed as he worked, relishing every moment he'd spent gathering the meat for this dish. It would be a joy to feed this to Fredericka. The façade she put up was a good one, but he could sense it starting to slip. He could sense the same happening in Will. Something had changed, and he wanted to know what it was. Hannibal smiled. He couldn't wait to have them both together at his table, but this would have to do for now.

Hannibal placed the plate in front of Fredericka gracefully, having already given Alana hers. She knew that Alana's presence was designed to throw her off balance. She had decided to refuse to play his game tonight. Waiting for her cue from Hannibal to begin eating, she took a sip of her wine as he walked to his seat.

"Inspired by Auguste Escoffier," Hannibal began, taking his place at the head of the table, "Langue d'agneau en Papillotte served with a sauce of duxelle and oyster mushrooms, picked myself."

"Don't think I've ever had tongue," Alana smiled as she laid her napkin across her lap.

Hannibal smiled, “It was a particularly chatty lamb.”

Fredericka shivered. She didn’t see Hannibal notice. “I read once that Romans used to kill flamingos just for the tongue. A tad excessive, I think,” she added.

“Your tongue has been very feisty this evening, Fredericka,” Hannibal mused, glancing at her with a sly grin, “You’ve proved that it’s nice to have an old friend for dinner.”

“Well I’m not sure whether to thank you or pour my wine into your lap,” Fredericka gave him a half smile as she took her first bite.

Hannibal smiled, “Wasting such a nice vintage would be a crime, and rather impolite.”

“What vintage would that be? This is fabulous,” Alana broke in, turning Hannibal’s attention back to her for a moment.

Fredericka exhaled quietly, taking a small bite of her meal and waiting for the meal to be over. The conversation carried on and dishes were cleared away. Hannibal turned to her again, “How have things gone with Dr. Gideon?”

“He’s certainly proved to be an..interesting case study. If we’re right, Dr. Gideon is going to provide us with the singular opportunity to analyze a pure sociopath,” she replied, “Alana’s actually far better suited to speak about him than I am.”

Alana’s eyes crinkled with slight irritation as she nodded at Fredericka, “I see three possibilities: Gideon is the Chesapeake Ripper or he just thinks he is, or he knows he isn’t.”

“I agree,” Fredericka reached for her wine glass, “There are so many elements to this, and after discussing it with Will I find I agree with his assertion that Gideon isn’t the Ripper.”

Hannibal looked at her, “I wasn’t aware you and Will were so well acquainted.”

“Neither was I,” Alana added, giving a fake smile over the rim of her wine glass.

“It’s a recent development,” Fredericka smiled tightly, “and I’d prefer not to discuss him when he’s not present to speak for himself. Circling back to Gideon, I’d mentioned the Ripper to him previously during interviews, but I had no idea that he’d latch on to being the Ripper.”

There was something peculiar in Hannibal’s eyes as Alana asked, “Is it possible you inadvertently planted the suggestion in Gideon’s mind that he was the Ripper?”

Fredericka smirked playfully, “Not suggesting coercive persuasion? That would be highly unethical, Alana. Are you trying to implicate me in something?”

“I said inadvertently,” the other woman stated blandly.

“It can be reasonable in certain circumstances,” Hannibal added, leaning onto his arm.

Alana glanced at him, almost surprised, “What circumstances?”

“It may’ve been useful trying to remind Gideon he’s the Chesapeake Ripper if he repressed those memories,” he began, “but if Will’s assertion is correct, then he can come to that conclusion on his own.”

Alana glanced at her again, “Would you mind if I had another session with Dr. Gideon?”

“Not at all. I’d love your insight. And if he’s been unethically manipulated somehow I need to know,” Fredericka replied sincerely.

Hannibal glanced between the two of them - Fredericka sincere and the noticeable tightness of Alana's smile - and smiled to himself, "Fredericka, would you care to assist me with dessert?"

"Gladly," she replied, standing and following him to the kitchen.

Fredericka watched as Hannibal peeled back the skin of a grape for garnish. "I love Norton grapes," Hannibal said, "Same color inside as outside. Peel it and the flesh is also purple, not like other grapes where flesh is white and color comes from the skin."

"A grape with nothing to hide," Fredericka mused, watching careful hands wield the knife.

"Were I in your position, I would have attempted psychic driving," Hannibal stated plainly, "Based on your familiarity with the subject, perhaps you already have."

She laughed, and he watched her carefully, "Thank you for having the decency to accuse me directly, Hannibal, but no. While I am familiar with the technique, I would never use it on a patient as disturbed as Gideon."

"You don't seem surprised," Hannibal sounded amused.

“You aren’t the first to accuse me, Hannibal, and you won’t be the last,” she replied, leaning into the counter, “However, you are the only one that’s made me laugh.”

He glanced up at her, “I’m glad I can provide you with some amusement.” Silence fell as he worked, before he asked, “Tell me about your friendship with Will.”

“Interesting question, doctor,” Fredericka huffed, “Will this go in his profile or mine?”

“Perhaps both,” Hannibal replied, walking over to the sink to wash his hands.

“Oh, he’ll hate that,” the woman hummed, “We met when Gideon recreated the Wound Man killing. We seemed to click quite well, have things in common, and we keep in touch fairly regularly. Its a standard friendship, really.” She looked up at the glass doors to the backyard and noticed he’d somehow moved directly behind her without her noticing, “Were you expecting something else?”

He only hummed, and she felt a hand skim along her hip as he leaned forward into her back, “Not particularly. But I find the idea of a friendship between you and Will..intriguing.”

Fredericka tilted her head back, eyes still watching the glass as her mind was screaming ‘predator, stay away’. “I’m sure you do,” she replied.

“And what does that mean?” he bent his head towards her neck.

“You’ll just have to find out, won’t you?” she maneuvered her way out of the cage of Hannibal’s arms, “Alana must be positively bored to tears in the dining room by now. Shall we?”

She grabbed hers and Alana’s desserts and swanned out of the kitchen. Hannibal watched her go, a smile creeping across his face. She knew something, and he wanted to know how.

“So how was dinner?” Will asked as he made himself comfortable with the serving of *tostones* she’d brought him.

Fredericka took a bite of her own helping before she spoke, “The short version is that he asked for my help with dessert, got me alone with him in the kitchen, asked about you, and almost kissed me.”

Will just blinked, “Huh. That’s…huh. These are really good, by the way.”

She nodded, “Mmhm. I absolutely would’ve let him, too. Thanks, it’s my mother’s recipe.”

“Really?” Will raised a skeptical eyebrow at her.

“Will,” she leaned forward, grinning slyly, “Are you telling me you wouldn’t?”

He just stared at her blankly for several moments before sighing, “I totally would.”

“Exactly,” she grinned smugly as she leaned back in her chair. “I’ve been meaning to ask,” Fredericka began, reaching into her bag and pulling out another container, “about your excess

mirror neurons and the echopraxia, have you thought about translating how you use it in your work to your craft?"

Will crossed his arms, "Huh."

Fredericka popped the container open, grabbing out a pastelito de gubaya y queso, "I've been thinking about it, and I feel like it would translate really well to precognizance. Try one."

"I'd never thought about it that way," Will absentmindedly reached for a pastry and took a bite, "Is this guava?"

She nodded, "Grandma's recipe. You should give it a shot. Could be useful."

"Hm," Will "Could be."

Before Fredericka could reply, the room went black.

"Shit," she muttered, standing quickly and grabbing her jacket.

"So how bad is this?" Will asked as they both rushed down the hallway.

"Well, everything's automated, so the holding cells will open," she checked her watch, "Backup generators should be kicking in soon, but I'm going to radio maintenance."

Will nodded, "Good."

She grabbed the walkie talkie and sent a call to the maintenance team. They walked in silence the rest of the way to where Alana was interviewing Gideon, and arrived as security

was telling him to step away from Alana.

"Are you alright?" Will asked, splitting from Fredericka as she went to talk to the security team as Alan stepped forward and out of Gideon's cell.

She nodded, "Pulled me into his cell to protect me from the other patients. Would the real Chesapeake Ripper do that?"

"Come to think of it, he might," Will mused as the lights flickered back on.

"I'm so sorry, Dr. Bloom," Fredericka exhaled, "I've just heard back from the maintenance team, and they say they have no idea what happened. Complete outage, but we're on the backup generators now. Are you hurt at all?"

Alana shook her head, "Not at all."

"We found Miriam Lass's severed arm at an abandoned observatory," Will placed the refilled water bowl on the floor for his dogs.

Fredericka paused, "You certainly know how to start a conversation, don't you?"

Will smiled to himself, “Gotta keep you on your toes somehow. And I gave your idea some thought.”

“Yes?” he could hear the smile in her voice.

He shook his head, “I’m gonna give Emmaline a call, see if she has a way to help me.”

“Good,” she sounded satisfied, “I really do think it’ll work, Will.”

“I hope it does,” he mumbled, petting Harley as he spoke.

“Will, I just want you to know if you ever have a problem, you can call me,” she said suddenly.

Will smiled, “I’ll keep that in mind, Fredericka.”

“Alright,” there was that smile, “I’ll let you go to give your mambo a call. I’ll see you soon, Will.”

“Yeah, see you soon,” he smiled as he hung up and dialed again, “Hey Emmaline.”

“Will, baby,” she sounded thrilled, “Tell me about this girl.”

“Jesus, Em,” Will sighed into the receiver, “You don’t waste any time, do you?”

The older woman laughed, “Not where my boy is concerned, I don’t. Now tell me about her.”

So Will told. He told Emmeline everything that he knew about Fredericka, something he's asked permission for beforehand. Emmeline expressed her approval repeatedly before pivoting.

"You and her are gon' have to be careful," Emmeline stated seriously, "When she tells you somethin', Will, listen to her. Trust her. Completely. She's got your best interests - and that child's - in her heart, more than anyone I can see around you."

Will nodded carefully, eyes catching sight of the box that contained his deck, "I know, Em. I know."

"I know you know, William, but sometimes it don't hurt to remind you."

"Guess so."

The two moved on to other topics, for a few hours before Will had to get to sleep. He was about to head upstairs, but he paused before turning around and grabbing his deck off the bookshelf. He shuffled quickly and began to pull.

"Six of cups," Will murmured, "three of swords, nine of coins, four of wands, eight of wands, ten of swords. Huh."

He swept up all the cards before depositing them back to his shelf and heading upstairs to try and meditate, which both Fredericka and Emmeline insisted would help start working his gift into his craft.

Miles away, Fredericka drifted off to sleep as the copal incense she had lit earlier finally dropped away to ashes.

Just outside the perimeter of her property, a monster stood in the dark watching, aching to move closer and wishing more than anything that he could be in two places at once.

Chapter End Notes

once again, sorry for the wait. i promise chapter 7 won't take as long

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!